

**Year 2**  
**Direct Support Professional Training**

# **Resource Guide**



**Session #1**

## **Supporting Choice: Identifying Preferences**

**Department of Education  
and the  
Regional Occupational Centers and Programs  
in partnership with the  
Department of Developmental Services**

**2000**

# List of Class Sessions

Session	Topic	Time
1	<b>Introduction and Supporting Choice: Identifying Preferences</b>	<b>3 hours</b>
2	Person-Centered Planning and Services	3 hours
3	Person-Centered Planning and Services	3 hours
4	Communication, Problem-Solving and Conflict Resolution	3 hours
5	Positive Behavior Support: Understanding Behavior as Communication	3 hours
6	Positive Behavior Support: Adapting Support Strategies to Ensure Success	3 hours
7	Teaching Strategies: Personalizing Skill Development	3 hours
8	Teaching Strategies: Ensuring Meaningful Life Skills	3 hours
9	Supporting Quality Life Transitions	3 hours
10	Wellness: Medication	3 hours
11	Wellness: Promoting Good Health	3 hours
12	Assessment	2 hours
	<b>Total Class Sessions</b>	<b>12</b>
	<b>Total Class Time</b>	<b>35 hours</b>

# Key Words

In this session, the key words are:

- Direct Support Professional
- Choice
- Likes and Dislikes
- Choice-making Skills
- Choice Opportunities
- Approach Behavior
- Avoidance Behavior
- Teaching Choice-making
- Person-Centered

## Information Brief

# Who Are Direct Support Professionals (DSPs)?

The term *Direct Support Professional* (DSP) was selected by the *National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals* to describe **individuals who work with people with disabilities in the places where they live and work.**

The DSP is also described as the person that **assists individuals in making choices; in leading self-directed lives; and in contributing to their communities.**

Finally, it is also the responsibility of the DSP to **encourage attitudes and behaviors in the community that support the inclusion of individuals with developmental disabilities.**

## Your Notes

Review from  
Year 1

**Information Brief****Identifying and Respecting Choice-Making and Preferences**

**Making choices means having control and confidence in our lives.** Typically, the more control we have over our lives, the more enjoyable our lives become. Choice is important in this way for all people – whether they have disabilities or not.

There are many ways that making choices is important for the individuals with whom we work. However, the most important way is for individuals to make choices during one's day-to-day activities. **Making choices increases an individual's daily enjoyment.** All of our lives are more enjoyable if we are doing things we like to do.

There are also some other ways that making choices are important. **First, making choices increases an individual's participation in important activities such as work duties, leisure routines and school events.** Research has shown over and over that people are much more likely to take part in activities of their own choice rather than activities which have been chosen for them.

**A second way making choices is important is that it helps to identify reinforcers that can be used with teaching strategies to help make learning new skills easier and more fun**

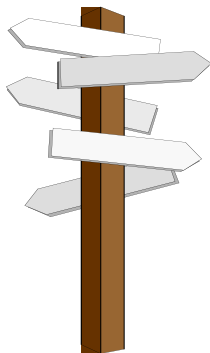
**Your Notes**

**for learners.** Additional information on how making choices as part of the teaching process can help teach meaningful skills to learners will be provided in later sessions.

**A third way that making choices is important for individuals with disabilities is that it makes it less likely that problem behavior will occur.**

People usually do not have problem behavior when they are enjoying themselves, and making choices helps people to enjoy themselves. More information about how choice making reduces problem behavior will be presented in later sessions on positive behavior support.

Most of us take choices for granted. For people with disabilities though, and especially people with more severe disabilities, making choices cannot be taken for granted. Surveys and observations have shown that many people with disabilities make very few choices in their lives. **Our job is to support individuals with whom we work in making many choices during the course of their routine day.**



## Your Notes

**Information Brief****Learning About How  
Individuals  
Use Choice-Making  
Skills****Your Notes**

To support individuals in making meaningful choices, we must provide choice opportunities in a way that individuals can understand. One of the main reasons that people with disabilities do not make many choices is that sometimes DSPs do not provide choice opportunities in a way that individuals can respond with a meaningful choice.

In order to support individuals in responding to a choice opportunity, **how we provide a choice must be based on an individual's choice-making skills.** Just like all of us, different individuals have different skills for making choices.

There are many ways to make choices. The figure on the next page shows different ways choices can be made. The way we give a choice opportunity should be based on the way that an individual can respond and make a choice.

Some individuals have the skills to make a choice by answering a question such as "What do you want?." This is shown on the left side of the scale on the following page. We call this a "hard" choice because a lot of communication and related skills are needed to be able to make a choice in this manner. Some individuals do not have these types of skills, so we must offer a choice opportunity in another way, such as

the ways on the right side of the figure. For individuals who have the most severe disabilities, sometimes the only choice-making skill they have is to respond to a single item when that item is presented by a support person. The support person must see how the individual responds to the item to see if the individual wants the item or not.

Sometimes we may provide one type of choice and find that the individual does not seem to understand the choice opportunity. We would then provide the choice in an easier way. For example, we might ask the individual during leisure time in the evening, "What would you like to do?." If the individual does not seem to understand, we might then ask, "Would you like to look at a magazine or listen to your radio?." If the individual still does not understand, we might ask the same question while actually showing the individual a magazine and radio and prompt the individual to point to what she or he wants.

## Your Notes

When we provide a choice in the way just described, it is of course important that once the individual makes a choice by saying or pointing that we provide what the individual chooses. **When we provide a choice opportunity, we *must* respect and honor the individual's choice.**

As indicated earlier, some individuals — and particularly people who have very severe or multiple disabilities — do not have the skills to respond to the type of choice opportunity just described. For individuals who do not have the skills to tell us what they want or to point to something they want, we have to provide a choice opportunity in an easier way.

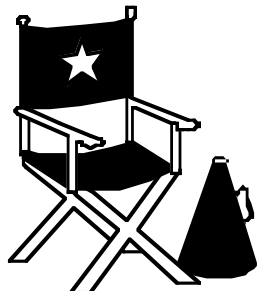
For individuals with the most serious disabilities, we often have to present a single item and watch how the individual responds to the item. When a one-item choice is presented, we watch the individual to see if she or he approaches or avoids the item.

**An approach might include smiling, reaching for, leaning toward or looking at the item. When an individual approaches an item in this manner, we should then give the individual the item.**

## Your Notes

Instead of approaching an item when presented, an individual might avoid the item. **Avoidance usually involves turning away from the item, pushing the item away, or frowning.** When an individual avoids an item when presented, the item should be removed and another item presented.

Sometimes a person may not approach or avoid an item. **Lack of approach or avoidance is called neutral behavior.** When neutral behavior is shown, we should allow the individual to sample the item. That is, we should make sure the person knows what is being offered by touching, looking at, tasting or using the item. The item should then be given again to check for approach or avoidance. If neutral behavior occurs the second time an item is given, the item should be removed.



## Your Notes

**Information Brief****Special Considerations  
When Learning About  
Choice-Making Skills  
and Providing Choices**

It's important to make sure that we present choices to people with disabilities in a way that can be easily understood. This helps people respond in a way that reflects their preferences, likes and dislikes. There are several things to do and think about when providing choices.

The first thing to think about are those times when a choice is provided and an individual does not respond. For example, if two objects are presented and the individual does not point to or otherwise choose any item.

**If an individual does not make a choice when provided with a choice opportunity, we have to determine if the individual does not like the choice options or does not understand the choice situation.** In the former case, we could offer choices of several other pairs of items. If, after several choice opportunities with different pairs of items, the individual still does not choose an item, we could assume that the person does not understand the choice situation or what is expected of him or her. In that case, we would then provide a choice in an easier way, such as by providing a single item and watching for approach or avoidance behavior.

**Your Notes**

**It is also important to look for individual choice-making behaviors when presenting two items or activities.** For example, some individuals tend to always pick something that is presented on their left side, or on their right side. For this reason, it is important to change the side on which we present the items. An example might be: when presenting a choice between looking at a magazine or listening to a radio, we should change the side on which we present the magazine and radio each time.

Another thing to keep in mind is that the manner of presenting choices as we have discussed can improve a person's choice-making skills. That is, **by providing many choices in a consistent manner, we can actually teach choice-making skills.**

**To support individuals in learning or improving choice-making skills, it is important to make sure the individuals always receive what they choose. This is another way we show respect and honor a person's choice.**

## Your Notes

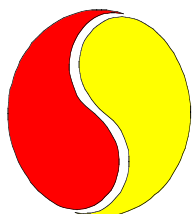
**Information Brief****When to Give Choices  
and Major Lifestyle  
Changes****Identifying When To Give  
Choices During The Day**

Think about the types of choices you made after getting up this morning. These choices may have involved getting out of bed or sleeping longer, what to have for breakfast, where to have breakfast, with whom to eat breakfast, and how to dress for the day. Some of these choices involved **what** to do. In other words, these were choices between activities (e.g., get out of bed or sleep later).

Other choices involved **how** to do an activity (e.g., take a shower or take a bath).

Still other types of choices involved **when** to do an activity, **where** to do an activity, and **with whom** to do the activity.

**There are many types of choices that can be made everyday to make our days more enjoyable. The same holds true for the individuals with whom we work. We should try to build as many choices as we can into the daily routines of the individuals with whom we work.**

**Your Notes**

### Supporting Individuals in Making Choices for Major Lifestyle Changes

The choices described so far involve the types of choices that can be built into the daily routines of individuals with disabilities with whom we work. **Again, supporting individuals in making many choices during their daily routine can increase the amount of enjoyment individuals experience day in and day out.**

There are other types of choices that can have a major effect on the quality of life of people with disabilities. These are choices that affect major lifestyle changes among individuals

Choices that affect major lifestyle changes among individuals include such choices as where to live, what job to work, and with whom to live, just to name a few. **We can help individuals in making choices that affect their lifestyle in a major way by making sure our supports and services are person-centered.** Providing person-centered supports and services is discussed in other classes as part of this training. However, the topic is raised here because by following the principles and practices of person-centered planning as much as possible, we can support individuals in having control over their lives. Control means choosing how one lives, and choosing how one lives makes life much better for everyone.

### Your Notes

# Key Word Dictionary

## Supporting Choice: Identifying Preferences

### Session #1

#### **Approach Behavior**

An approach behavior might include smiling, reaching for, leaning toward or looking at a particular choice item.

#### **Avoidance Behavior**

Instead of approaching a choice item when presented, an individual might avoid it. For example, turn away from the item, push it away, or frown.

#### **Choice**

A choice is a statement of preference. Selecting something to do from one or more options. Choice opportunities must be provided in a way that each individual understands. Individuals with developmental disabilities have a right to make choices including where and with whom to live, the way they spend their time each day and with whom, what things to do for fun, and plans for the future. Making frequent choices increases one's life enjoyment. Choice means having control and confidence in our lives.

#### **Choice-Making Skills**

The ability to know personal likes and dislikes and to choose between people, places, food, and activities when those choices are presented.

#### **Choice Opportunities**

Those situations where someone is provided with a choice between two or more activities, foods, etc.

#### **Direct Support Professional**

The term *direct support professional* (DSP) describes persons who work with people with disabilities in the places where these individuals live and work. Assists individuals in making choices; in leading self-directed lives; and in contributing to their communities. Finally, they encourage attitudes and behaviors in the community that support the inclusion of individuals with developmental disabilities.

### **Likes and Dislikes**

The foods, activities, people and places that individuals choose or do not choose (sometimes referred to as preferences).

### **Person-Centered**

Supporting people with disabilities in making their own choices for everyday and major lifestyle decisions.

### **Teaching Choice-Making**

The different ways used to present opportunities for choices in what, how, where, when and with whom people do activities. The result of this teaching is choice-making.

## If You Want to Read More About Supporting Choice: Identifying Preferences

**Bambara, L. M., & Koger, F. (1998).**

Opportunities for Daily Choice Making. Washington, DC: American Association on Mental Retardation.

**Belfiore, P. J., & Toro-Zambrana, W. (1994).**

Recognizing choices in community settings by people with significant disabilities. Washington, DC: American Association on Mental Retardation.

**Everson, J. M., & Reid, D. H. (1999).**

Person-centered planning and outcome management: Maximizing organizational effectiveness in supporting quality lifestyles among people with disabilities. Morganton, NC: Habilitative Management Consultants.

**Parsons, M. B., Harper, V. B., Jensen, J. M., & Reid, D. H. (1997).**

Assisting older adults with severe disabilities in expressing leisure preferences: A protocol for determining choice-making skills. Research in Developmental Disabilities, 18, 113-126.



# Worksheets and Activities

## Optional Activity: Supporting Choice

**Directions:** Select a daily routine in the place where you work. It can be the early morning routine from the time an individual gets up until time for work, at mealtime, or the late afternoon or in the evening during leisure time. List the choice that is now offered in the left column. In the right column, list as many choices as you can that could be given to the individuals in the home where you work.

**The selected routine?**

**The way it is today for the individual**

**Other choices that might be offered**

<b>What?</b>	<b>What?</b>
<b>How?</b>	<b>How?</b>
<b>When?</b>	<b>When?</b>
<b>Where?</b>	<b>Where?</b>
<b>With Whom?</b>	<b>With Whom?</b>

